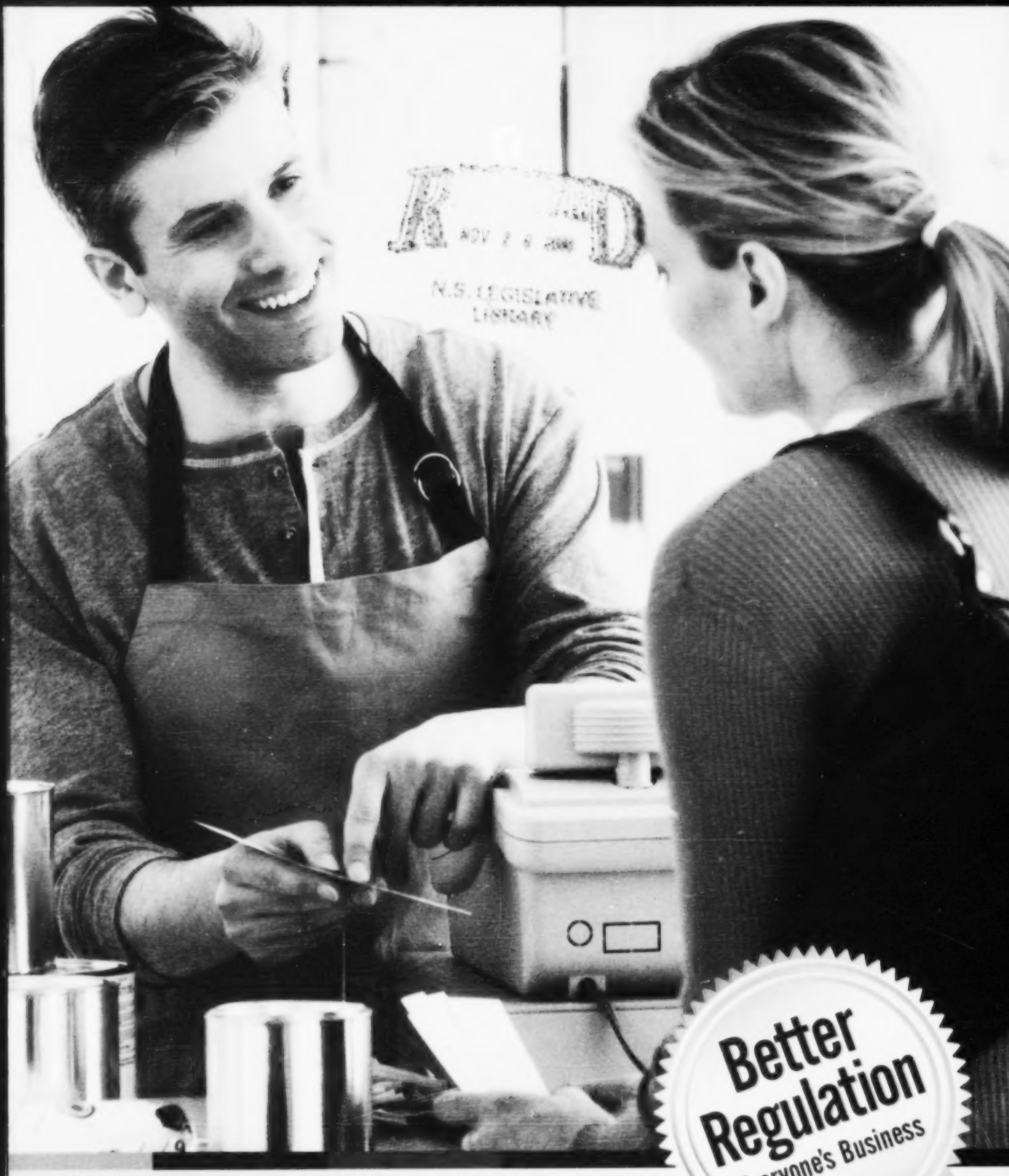
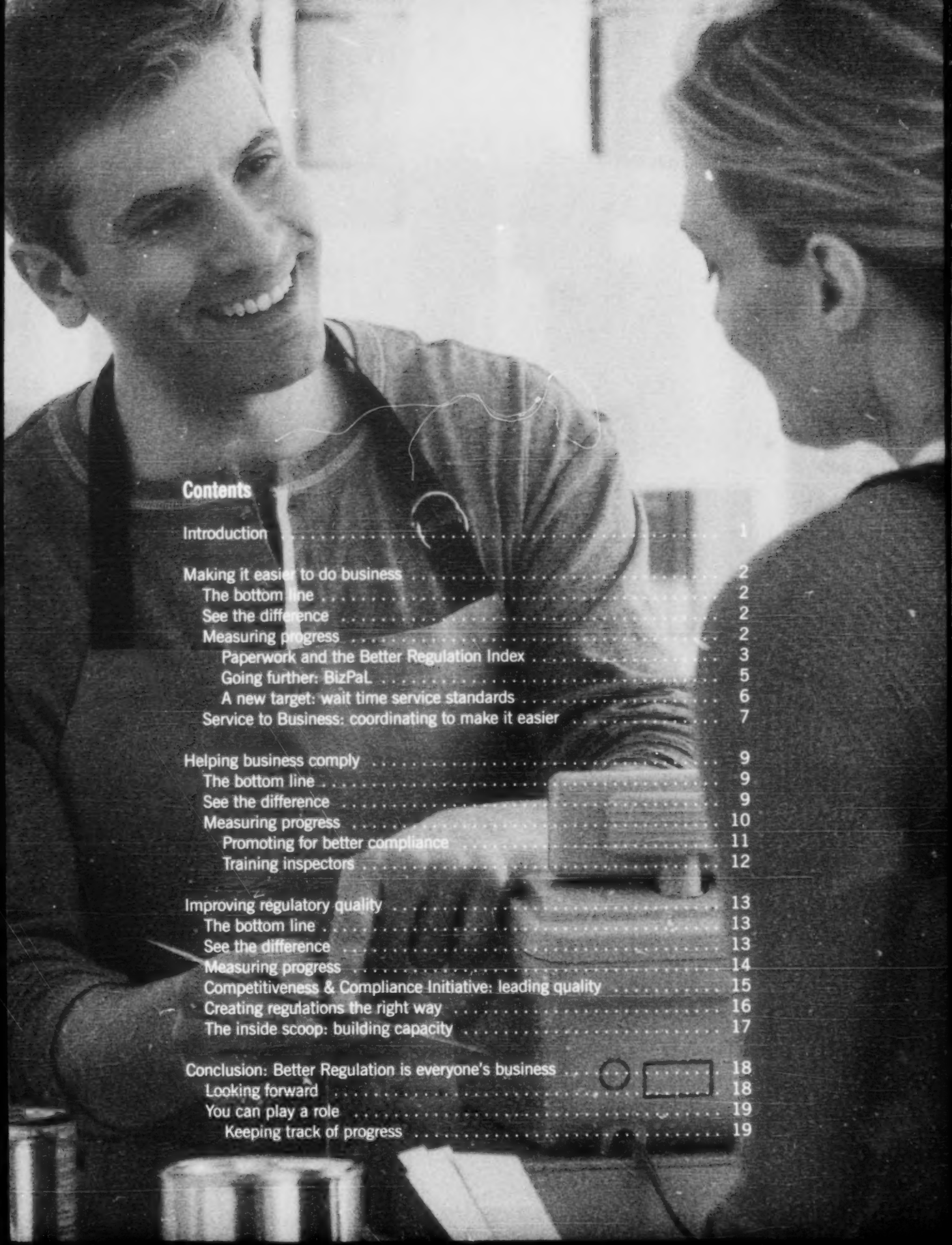



# Better Regulation 2006/07 Progress Report



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# Message from the Minister

I AM PLEASED TO PRESENT THE SECOND ANNUAL progress report highlighting Nova Scotia's accomplishments on the Better Regulation Initiative in 2006/07.

Last year's progress report, the first since the Better Regulation Initiative began in 2005, laid out our starting point. This included our first target – to reduce the paperwork burden by 20% by 2010. Our results in year two show that we not only stopped the growth of this burden, but reduced it by about 2.5%. It is an improvement, but we are aiming for even greater progress next year. You will learn more about our additional targets, such as establishing a 10 day service standard, in the following pages.

The province's vision is to improve competitiveness of business and protect our communities, but we know there is not a short-term solution. It has to be an on-going initiative to change government culture, change the way we think and do our jobs.

Nova Scotia needs to be a leader and needs to make better regulation a priority – and we have. With this focus, we will improve the quality of life of our citizens, families and communities.

Our success with the Better Regulation Initiative is in part due to the commitment of the province's civil servants. They were not only challenged with reducing the administrative burden now and over the next few years, but also, and most importantly, to make sustainable improvements to our regulatory systems.

This progress report demonstrates our commitment to report annually on progress. I invite you to read the highlights of the province's accomplishments in year two of our Better Regulation Initiative, and I also encourage you to stay up-to-date on our progress throughout the year by visiting the Better Regulation website at www.gov.ns.ca/betterregulation/.

The Honourable Jamie Muir
Chair of Treasury and Policy Board

# Message from the Chair of the Steering Committee

ALMOST A YEAR HAS PASSED since we outlined the priorities and directions of the Better Regulation Initiative in the first progress report. During that time, we have added more targets and clarity to our objectives, and moved from the foundation we created last year to action this year. And we are seeing results.

This past year, we succeeded in turning around the growth trend in paperwork burden for business. I invite you to read this progress report for examples of where the paperwork burden is being reduced, as well as how we have streamlined access to regulatory requirements by launching BizPaL, a single point on-line tool.

When government announced the commitment of a 10-day standard to turn around licenses and permits in March 2007, the Steering Committee welcomed this as a complement to the work already being done to reduce paperwork. Together, these two priorities will make it easier to do business in Nova Scotia, while making sure that citizens and communities continue to be protected. Work has begun with all regulatory departments to ensure we meet the interim target of having 50% of licenses and permits turned around within 10 days by 2008.

Over the course of the year, the Steering Committee examined the work we had underway, continued to discuss issues with business leaders, and identified gaps that required attention. We know that sustainable progress requires changes to how we consider, design and implement regulation. That is why we have added new targets and priorities to improve compliance with regulations, and established solid principles for regulation design such as consultation and impact analysis. A lot of good work is already underway in several departments.

This report highlights the significant progress we have made this past year. I am looking forward to building on our initial successes, and to continue working closely with business and citizens so that together we can achieve and maintain a quality regulatory environment.

Nancy Vanstone
Acting Deputy Minister Environment and Labour
Chair, Better Regulation Steering Committee

# Introduction

2006-07 MARKS THE SECOND YEAR for the Government of Nova Scotia's Better Regulation Initiative (BRI). Better Regulation is designed to keep the benefits and protection of regulation while making it easier to do business.

The focus in the first year was on understanding the benefits and impacts of existing regulation and getting a baseline measurement of the paperwork burden on Nova Scotia business. All provincial departments contributed to measuring the paperwork burden and tracking progress toward the reduction target of 20% by 2010. The Better Regulation Index baseline from 2006 and the 2007 figure are included in this report.

To further guide Better Regulation and track progress, the BRI Steering Committee set strategic objectives this year and four more targets for achieving them. These targets are supported by actions to improve the regulatory environment now, and to continue making lasting improvements:

- ensure applications for most licenses and permits are turned around within 10 business days by 2010;
- ensure 80% of regulatory programs have compliance promotion plans in place by 2010;
- provide consistent training on inspection and investigation skills for all inspectors by 2010; and
- provide single-point access to government requirements for 80% of industry sectors across 80% of Nova Scotia municipalities through BizPaL by 2009.

As the initiative progresses, even more targets may be added.

Since quality regulation is the key to lasting improvement, BRI has committed to establish principles and a consistent approach to regulatory management across the government in 2008.

Read on to find out how Better Regulation is:

- making it easier to do business in Nova Scotia;
- helping business comply with regulation; and
- improving the quality of regulation in the long term.

All of these improvements will make compliance more achievable – and that means better protection for the public and the environment.

**Regulation exists to protect the public, business and the environment. The challenge is to do that well without adding unnecessary work to business. Better regulation was launched in spring 2005 to make lasting changes to how we regulate by building a culture of regulatory quality and continuous improvement across government.**

*"The survival of our businesses – and our way of life – hinges on keeping government's attention on Better Regulation. If we don't have simpler, more effective regulation then our businesses can't compete in the global marketplace."*

Brad Smith, Vice President, Greater Halifax Partnership

# Making it easier to do business

## The bottom line

Through the Better Regulation Initiative, government employees are taking action to reduce the effort for business – both in time and cost – to comply with regulations, while maintaining regulatory protection. That means a reduction in the administrative time spent finding out what regulations apply to you, filling out forms, providing information and waiting for approvals.

## See the difference

The changes being made will benefit business by:

- making it easier to find information on regulation;
- offering more options for how businesses provide information and how they apply for things like permits and licences, including online options in many cases;
- minimizing the amount of time businesses have to wait for approvals and responses, and publicizing those times so you know what to expect;
- making forms easier to fill out; and
- removing duplication or extra requirements that don't add to protection.

These kinds of changes respond to the needs of our business clients, while maintaining the results regulations need to achieve and that contribute to our quality of life.

**It costs Nova Scotia businesses about $246 per employee to comply with regulations, 80% of the Canadian average. Combined, Atlantic Canada has the lowest cost at an average of $220.**

**StatsCan 2005 Survey of Regulatory Compliance Costs**

## Measuring progress

To measure progress toward making it easier for business, the Better Regulation Initiative has set specific targets and deadlines:

- reduce the paperwork burden by 20% by 2010, as measured by the Better Regulation Index;
- provide single-point access to government requirements for 80% of industry sectors across 80% of Nova Scotia municipalities through BizPaL by 2009; and
- ensure applications for most licenses and permits are turned around within 10 business days by 2010.

### Paperwork and the Better Regulation Index

The paperwork burden was the first target set for the Better Regulation Initiative for a number of reasons:

- Paperwork can be a significant amount of work for business, and it's proportionately larger for small business.
- Changes to paperwork can make it easier for business without negatively affecting the protection element.
- Initial work on improving regulation made it clear the paperwork burden was a good indicator of the overall regulatory burden.
- Addressing paperwork targets the cumulative impact of regulation from all departments on business.
- Finally, it has a significant impact on client satisfaction and frustration levels!

To estimate the paperwork burden associated with provincial regulation, the Better Regulation Index was created. As the first inventory of regulatory paperwork in Nova Scotia, the Index estimates the total time it takes business to complete paperwork for all provincial government departments. It has been used to get a baseline number and allows the government to measure progress to the 20% reduction target.

PROGRESS

## Staying on the road

For commercial truck drivers, time is money. New technology on Highway 104 at Auld's Cove means most trucks headed east no longer have to spend time at the scale house. The new Weigh-in-Motion (WIM) system measures commercial vehicle weights while they are travelling, as well as sensing the number of axles, the speed and other technical information. In addition, the system takes photos of the front and side of the truck cab. Any of this information can be retrieved later.

Electronic sign boards before the scale house tell commercial vehicle drivers if they can keep going or need to report to the scale house. The system flags trucks that are close to or over their weight limit, as well as choosing random vehicles for an in-depth inspection, maintaining the same level of protection as when all vehicles had to stop.

From January to May 2007, only 2.8% (13,361) of commercial vehicles travelling toward Cape Breton had to report to the scale house. In addition to saving truckers time and money, the change improves road safety and benefits the environment since fewer trucks are idling in a line up. This is the first WIM system in place in the province and an evaluation, including a survey of truckers, is planned.

The Index found that Nova Scotia businesses spent an estimated 615,000 hours on regulatory paperwork required by provincial government departments from April 2005 to March 2006. It's a baseline that equates to a cost of over $14 million dollars and one that needs to decrease.

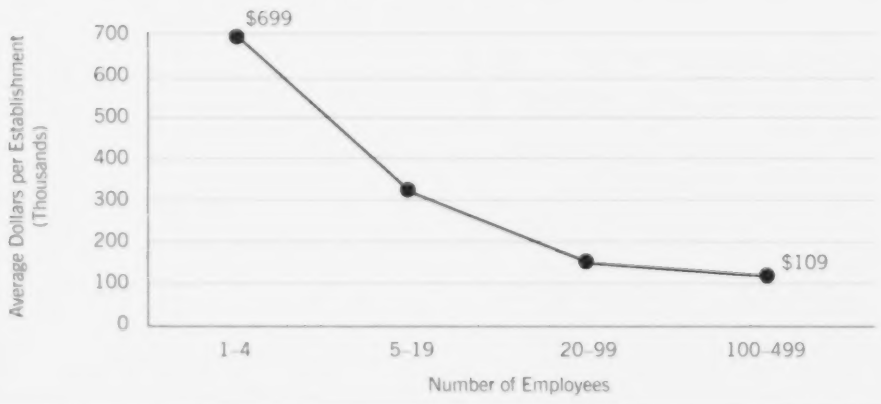
The results for year two – April 2006 to March 2007 – show a reduction of approximately 2.5% to just under 600,000 hours. This represents a reduction, but more than that, it shows a reversal of a previous trend where the number of hours spent on regulatory paperwork had been growing consistently year after year. While this is an improvement, we are aiming for greater progress next year to move us closer to our target.

To make the numbers comparable year-over-year, the Index is calculated using the transaction number from the baseline year, adding any new paperwork requirements. The transaction number is multiplied by the average time per transaction for that year. This approach means changes such as the number of businesses don't incorrectly imply an increase or reduction in the total time it takes to complete the paperwork.

Departments from across the provincial government contributed to the reduction in paperwork. Here are some examples:

- Environment and Labour extended the licenses for elevating devices and fuel safety from one year to three years. The department also introduced an online application for the fuel safety license.
- Forms from Energy, Education and Natural Resources were made available online.
- The Land Registry simplified the registration process for updating land parcel information and establishing title. Filing electronically takes one-third of the time of submitting paper and online usage is at 30% and growing.

**The cost of compliance per employee by size of establishment**




Source: MARCAM, 2007 Survey of Regulatory Compliance Costs

### Going further: BizPaL

Although BRI is a provincial government initiative, as opportunities arise, the province is working with other levels of government to make it easier for business. One example is BizPaL. This free, online service offers business people single-point access to determine the permits and licences required by the municipal, provincial and federal governments. Nova Scotia is the first Atlantic province to partner with the federal government to offer this service to business.

Building on their work in making information easily accessible to business, Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations (SNSMR) recommended implementing BizPaL and has made it a priority for 2007-08. As part of the preparation, SNSMR led the effort to map all provincial licences and permits by business sector, an activity that involved all departments. Then the department sought two municipal partners – New Glasgow and Halifax – to join the system in July 2007, covering at least 350 of the most common industry sectors.

These steps will help move the province toward its target of getting 80% of municipalities in the province to join the system and list their regulatory requirements and to cover 80% of industry sectors by 2009.

PROGRESS

## Protecting the environment, not the paperwork

Changes to the application and approval processes for on-site septic systems are saving Nova Scotia home builders time and money, while ensuring a clean and sustainable environment. Among the changes, the application form was reduced from eight pages to two, making it easier for the builders and the inspectors.

Before roll-out across the province, a pilot project in Bedford and Bridgewater tested the regulatory changes, which reduced the wait time for approvals from three weeks to one.

The regulations were developed after public consultation that included 75 comments from industry, community organizations, governments, consultants and citizens. Waste Water Nova Scotia's contribution helped ensure the changes were effective. Now, building in areas where municipal sewer and water aren't available can begin sooner. Now inspectors spend more time on targeted audits and other environmental threats.

### A new target: wait time service standards

The Province added a significant new target for Better Regulation as part of the 2007/08 Government Business Plan. The new commitment to turn around most licenses and permits issued by provincial departments within 10 business days will be met by 2010. This complements the effort to reduce paperwork by tackling the time business waits to hear the results of their application.

In fact, to help ensure we're on schedule, an interim target of 50% of licenses and permits must meet the new turn-around time by 2008. There will be some exceptions where the 10-day turn-around time isn't appropriate, such as when public consultation is required. However, any alternative service standard has to be approved by Cabinet and be made available to the public so expectations are clear.

PROGRESS

## Speedier, simpler permits

Installing propane in a home should be safe and simple. Prior to recent changes, safety was ensured, but getting a permit took three to five days. The Nova Scotia Government has changed the paper permit process to a simple online registration system with virtually no wait time. It offers almost immediate acknowledgement to proceed with less paperwork. Protection is maintained since the computer generates a registration that installers have to keep and, as always, installations are subject to random audits.

Close to 90% of propane installers are using the new online registration for residential instalments. This represents about 2500 permits annually with less paperwork and less waiting time.

*"The single thing that will increase business clients' satisfaction scores most dramatically is to make public sector service delivery faster."*

Top 10 Highlights of Taking Care of Business 2, Institute for Citizen-Centred Service, 2007 (www.iccs-isac.org)

## Service to Business: coordinating to make it easier

Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations (SNSMR) leads the efforts of BRI to make it easier for clients to do business with government. The work of this department, much of it in cooperation with other provincial departments, makes a substantial contribution to the targets for reducing the administrative work of business.

The Service to Business project was developed based on the service needs and preferences of clients. It was designed to make it easier for business people to find information and get help on starting a business, understanding regulation and keeping up with requirements. Launched during Small Business Week in October 2006, the project includes:

- Service-to-Business areas in all Access Nova Scotia Centres with information displays and dedicated, specially trained staff to support business clients and help with forms and transactions, as well as publicly available terminals and printers;
- a 1-800 Service-to-Business telephone line with dedicated staff to answer questions from business clients across Nova Scotia and provide them with information; and
- an improved website that serves as a gateway for business clients to referrals, information, and forms organized by the business life cycle, as well as a few common industries. (As of July 2007, this site will be known as "Access to Business.")

In many ways, Service to Business was the beginning of pulling all of the pieces together to help business identify requirements and resources. It also offers personal help at the Access Centres and by phone. The launch received positive feedback from small business owners as well as business organizations, universities and financial institutions.

*At the launch of Service to Business, one person summed it up well: "[Service to Business] is a quantum leap forward."*

Now SNSMR is building on that momentum with the implementation of BizPaL.

**88% of Nova Scotia businesses surveyed agreed with the statement: "Good service from government is essential to a healthy business climate." Canada-wide that figure was 87%.** Taking Care of Business 2, Institute for Citizen-Centred Service, 2007

Business clients can use BizPaL to generate a list of their requirements for all three levels of government. Then, they can complete many of their transactions with the provincial government through SNSMR's 24 hour-a-day online service – the Nova Scotia Business Registry. On this website, they can apply for, pay for and/or renew more than 60 licences, permits, registrations and certifications at their convenience.

PROGRESS

## Making safety accessible 24/7

Through the Workers' Compensation Board's (WCB) MyAccount, employers can now take care of most of their safety needs, securely over the Internet any time and any day. They can:

- manage and view their WCB accounts;
- access claims information and injury trends, even comparing their experience to others in their industry;
- submit forms; and
- use prevention tools such as the Incident Cost safety calculator, which shows how improving safety performance can save people and money.

That should allow employers to better manage their health and safety issues. Already, over 20% of the province's employers have registered for the program, including more than 85% of the Nova Scotia's 150 largest employers. Reaction has been very positive and within four months of adding online reporting, almost 300 injury reports have been submitted electronically.

The change also allows WCB staff to spend less time processing claims and more time serving employers and injured workers.

# Helping business comply

## The bottom line

Helping businesses comply with regulation benefits everyone. It means businesses are better able to meet regulatory requirements while avoiding unnecessary costs, saving them time and money. Increased compliance also means regulations important to our quality of life are respected. Finally, more consistent enforcement makes for a level playing field for all businesses.

*"The Better Regulation Initiative is designed to prove it's possible to improve protection and make it easier to do business in Nova Scotia."*

Nancy Vanstone, Chair of the Better Regulation Steering Committee

## See the difference

Better compliance means better protection for the public and the environment. That's best achieved by both the government and business doing their part. Government has a responsibility to provide clear information on the standards against which businesses are measured and to apply those standards consistently. On the other hand, businesses have a responsibility to seek help when they're uncertain and to comply on a voluntary basis.

As departments make improvements in this area, businesses benefit from:

- greater awareness and understanding of the requirements that apply to them;
- support from departments to help them comply; and
- a more consistent approach to enforcement across government.

*"Stakeholders prefer the 'carrot versus stick' approach of implementing programs to support compliance and rewarding best practices."* Nova Scotia small business owner

## Measuring progress

Targets have also been set to measure progress on helping businesses comply:

- ensure 80% of regulatory programs have compliance promotion plans in place by 2010; and
- provide consistent training on inspection and investigation skills for all inspectors by 2010.

PROGRESS

## Focusing on safety potential

The Priority Employer Program is about improving workplace safety and getting people back to work, which can ultimately save money for employers on their premiums to the Workers' Compensation Board (WCB).

The Program is focused on businesses with the most potential to improve safety, based on the number of claims per year, and provides them with extra support. WCB staff work onsite with employers to:

- help them analyze where and how accidents occur; and
- offer a survey tool for employees to help develop an action plan for improvements.

Depending on various factors, the time onsite could be up to one day per week for a year and could encompass anything from providing information to hands-on coaching.

In 2006, 126 employers were involved in the program, and they've seen results. Compared to the results of all firms insured by the WCB, those who received a year of support had:

- 8% less frequent time loss injuries;
- 10% lower costs per claim; and
- 15% shorter claims.

For employees, that means fewer injuries and a more safe and timely return to work for those who are injured.

### Promoting for better compliance

To meet regulatory standards, businesses need to know which ones apply to them and what they mean. Compliance promotion focuses on getting that information to clients and helping them understand. BRI has set a target for 80% of regulatory programs to have compliance promotion plans in place by 2010, and already, several departments have taken action. Here are a few examples:

- After involving industry stakeholders to develop a compliance strategy for labour standards, Environment and Labour realized that awareness is the greatest barrier to compliance. The Labour Standards division conducted advertising, ran media features, enhanced its website and informational materials, and held 32 information sessions with employer and employee groups in 2006/07.
- Transportation and Public Works (TPW) offers information sessions on vehicle compliance for the trucking industry, with 46 so far in 2007. The sessions increase awareness amongst the truckers, contributing to road safety, less road damage and increased truck profitability. Officials from one trucking company were so pleased, they're considering including the TPW session as part of their spring training program.
- Community Services works with 25 to 30 potential day care operators each year. Staff members are available to assist prospective operators by helping them understand the regulations and working with them to develop programs and standards for a viable day care. The department holds information sessions for day care operators and staff when any new day care initiative is launched. Also, the department has created tools and resources for "family home" day cares, posting the start-up package and samples of completed forms on their website.

**57% of Nova Scotia businesses surveyed agreed with the statement: "I can easily access the information I need to comply with government regulations." Canada-wide, 59% agreed.** Taking Care of Business 2, Institute for Citizen-Centred Service, 2007

### Training inspectors

The training that Environment and Labour developed in conjunction with the Nova Scotia Community College for their inspectors has now been offered to more than 50 individuals. Reaction was so positive that a new target has been added to Better Regulation. This or similar training will be rolled out for inspectors in other provincial departments by 2010.

The program was designed to complement their technical training and covers inspection, investigation and prosecution: useful topics for all inspectors. Several departments have already expressed an interest in the training, which encourages sharing of experiences and inspection issues so inspectors can learn from one another. Ultimately, offering training to all inspectors will help them be better-equipped and provide businesses with a more consistent experience.

PROGRESS

## Parlez-vous Français?

You don't need to travel far to enjoy language diversity in Nova Scotia. Accessing services in your mother tongue is now getting easier for business owners. A number of provincial government departments have taken steps to improve French services.

Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations' website for business – Service to Business – is bilingual, although only a few forms are available in French just yet. The 1-800 line for business also has bilingual staff. The new BizPaL service is also available in French, with some forms translated.

Here is a sample of the government services and materials now available in French:

- bilingual staff now work at the Registry of Motor Vehicles in Dartmouth and Yarmouth and five bilingual staff are available to answer calls to Access Nova Scotia;
- a bilingual Inquiries Officer provides service at the Labour Standards office, and the division is making it the norm to publish information that affects every workplace in French and English;
- recent consultations on labour standards for rest breaks and the minimum wage included a French component;
- Fisheries and Aquaculture has translated their brochure on funding programs for innovation and has two bilingual representatives who work on the front line; and
- the provincial government is making more news releases available in French, particularly when they are of broad interest.

# Improving regulatory quality

## The bottom line

While reducing the paperwork burden and helping business comply can make a difference with existing regulation, Better Regulation aims to go even further. In keeping with what we heard from business, the Initiative will lead to improved regulatory processes and continuous improvement. The focus will be on ensuring the provincial government takes a more consistent approach to future regulation, that it's the right approach and that it carefully considers the impacts.

Quality regulatory processes involve those affected in considering the best options to solve an issue – whether or not that is regulation – and in improving the solution even after it's in place.

**Improving quality is the essence of better regulation:**

- **regulating for the right reason,**
- **focussing on the outcome,**
- **taking the best approach to solve the issue, and**
- **considering the impact – on business, the public and the environment.**

## See the difference

Much of the work on the quality of regulation will be invisible to business, with the exception of consultation. However, all of the results of this work should be noticeable, particularly in how new regulation or other solutions are developed and rolled out. To improve regulatory quality, government employees are:

- setting standards to seek appropriate input on issues and solutions;
- establishing principles and consistent checklists to manage regulation across government; and
- building in checks and balances to make sure proposed solutions seek the best outcome for the public and the environment with the least impact on business.

Essentially, processes, tools and training will be put in place across government to increase consistency and expertise in regulatory management, ensuring lasting improvements to how we regulate.

*"We urge the government to consider regulation only when alternatives have been thoroughly explored, when the impacts of such regulation have been understood and considered and when potentially affected businesses have been consulted."*

Halifax Chamber of Commerce

## Measuring progress

Since the initial focus of Better Regulation was to reduce the burden on business with some quick results, targets were focussed on paperwork and compliance. However, quality regulation is the key to lasting improvement. So, BRI has committed to:

- establish principles and a consistent approach to regulatory management across the government in 2008.

Then efforts will focus on ensuring the principles and approach become part of the culture – changing the way we think about regulation and the way we regulate by 2010.

PROGRESS

## Heating homes for less – in 40 days

A fuel rebate is good news for many people, but it can mean a lot of changes behind the scenes, as was the case for fuel companies in late 2006. The Government announced, on October 30, a rebate of 8% on heating oil and propane for eligible residential customers, starting December 1.

For fuel companies, there was a lot of work to do in only 40 days to get ready for point-of-sale rebates. The list was long:

- upgrading or converting meters and software on hundreds of delivery trucks (with only four companies in the province capable of doing this);
- ensuring properties were eligible;
- changing meter tickets and invoices to reflect the rebate; and
- upgrading or reprogramming some back-office accounting systems.

In those 40 days, Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations worked with home heating companies to get the job done. The department offered a 1-800 number, an online tool and face-to-face meetings to provide and match customer lists. Financial assistance was provided for equipment upgrading. Even so, any program can experience bumps at the outset. So, after the program launch, vendor feedback resulted in changes to the program so vendors could get the rebate money from the government more quickly. It was a very cooperative effort that resulted in a successful program for Nova Scotians.

## Competitiveness & Compliance Initiative: leading quality

The Competitiveness and Compliance Initiative (CCI) has developed a multi-year strategy to implement all elements of Better Regulation in its home department of Environment and Labour. In addition, CCI is leading BRI's work to improve the quality of regulation for the entire provincial government. CCI is establishing the principles and approach that will help ensure lasting improvements, and applying them first within Environment and Labour. The work encompasses developing tools to help identify and prioritize issues as well as design effective solutions.

The principles of regulatory management that CCI has developed include some ideas that will be familiar to problem-solvers in business as well. Here is a sampling of the principles:

- Prioritize areas to tackle: you can't take them all on at once, so each year departments will plan their regulatory priorities.
- Engage stakeholders: that includes ongoing consultation on issues and potential solutions, similar to what BRI is doing as the initiative progresses.
- Focus on outcomes or performance objectives: regulation or other solutions should address the real issue and make a difference – it's not necessary to prescribe the how in great detail if different approaches can achieve the right result.
- Consider a broad set of policy options: regulation isn't the only potential solution and in some cases, it may not be the best one.
- Analyze costs and benefits: to develop regulation that is effective with the least impact, you have to understand the impact and make it as streamlined as possible. Quality is about achieving the best outcome with the least unnecessary impact.
- Measure progress: the only way to see if the solution works is to review it later and see if the outcomes you get match your objectives.

In keeping with the principles above, the regulatory management policy will be about results. It's not meant to be entirely prescriptive, but it is meant to focus departmental efforts. So, they will be asked to show the evidence of better regulation, not just that they've completed a checklist.

For more information on CCI and to see their 2007 annual report, visit the website at www.gov.ns.ca/enla/cci/.

*"Pick important problems. Fix them and tell everyone about it."*

Dr. Malcolm Sparrow, Professor, John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University

## Creating regulations the right way

Better Regulation encompasses new regulations, when they're the best solution. Part of the government's commitment is to apply the principles of regulatory management when new legislation is introduced and to any new regulations developed to implement legislation.

One example this year is the new Environmental Goals and Sustainable Prosperity Act, which aims to make the province one of the cleanest and most sustainable environments in the world by 2020. Recognizing that we can improve our economy and protect our environment, the Act also commits to raising Nova Scotia's economic performance to the Canadian average or better by 2020. In keeping with Better Regulation, this Act embodies the notion that business growth and protection can, and should, go hand-in-hand. The Act also calls for any new regulations required to be created using the better regulation principles, including consultation with key stakeholders and citizens.

PROGRESS

## Easing into new regulations

To adapt your business to a new regulation, you need the time and information to understand it. The new Workplace Violence Prevention Regulations, and the plan to roll them out, were developed with this in mind.

The Department of Environment and Labour held a forum, as part of the 2007 Nova Scotia Safety Council conference, to get input on the draft strategy. To give businesses time to adjust and come up with their own solutions, the roll-out happens in two phases:

- the hazard self-assessment had to be completed by Oct. 1, 2007; and
- the regulations are going into full effect on Apr. 1, 2008.

Information developed on the regulations is plain and simple. Businesses were provided a handy self-assessment tool to help determine the level of violence risk in their workplace, and a website was set up with additional resources. Finally, Environment and Labour partnered with the Nova Scotia Community College to develop information sessions. Ten sessions were held across Nova Scotia in June and July for over 500 attendees. Employers left the working sessions with completed hazard self-assessments.

## The inside scoop: building capacity

Change doesn't come without effort. To change the way government employees think about regulation and the way they regulate, they have to be given opportunities to further increase their expertise and ability.

In October 2006, CCI hosted a conference on "The Regulatory Craft in Nova Scotia" for all of government. It provided an opportunity to share and learn from the best regulatory practices across the provincial government, as well as from other jurisdictions. The 150 attendees also listened to regulatory experts, including Dr. Malcolm Sparrow, a professor at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University, who gave the keynote address.

On June 6, 2007, Better Regulation brought together 80 provincial government employees to get an update on the initiative and hear from a panel of business leaders and get their perspective on regulation. The first Better Regulation Initiative Staff Update, a half-day conference, included a discussion on the impact of excessive regulation on competitiveness.

The business panel included:

- Leanne Hachey, Vice-President Atlantic, Canadian Federation of Independent Business;
- Brad Smith, Vice-President, Greater Halifax Partnership; and
- Holly Boston, Executive Director, Nova Scotia Association of Regional Development Authorities.

Each described the regulatory impacts felt by small- and medium-sized business, and focused on the areas most relevant to their members.

Departments are also working on their decision-making processes for regulation, coming up with standards and making sure the right questions get asked. Thanks to CCI, there is considerable work being done in Environment and Labour, and other departments are also taking action:

- the departments of Agriculture and Fisheries and Aquaculture are being served by a regulatory unit that reviews all regulatory proposals for quality and consistency; and
- Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations now has two policy analysts coordinating business planning and regulatory proposals and ensuring they are consistent with government's initiatives including Better Regulation.

*"The session opened my eyes to how many people are involved in BRI and how important it is to improving regulations across government. Now I understand that everyone has a role to play."* government employee regarding June 6 session

# Conclusion: Better Regulation is everyone's business

Better Regulation really is everyone's business and that's why we're reporting on progress and plans. Communicating is an important part of what we're doing because:

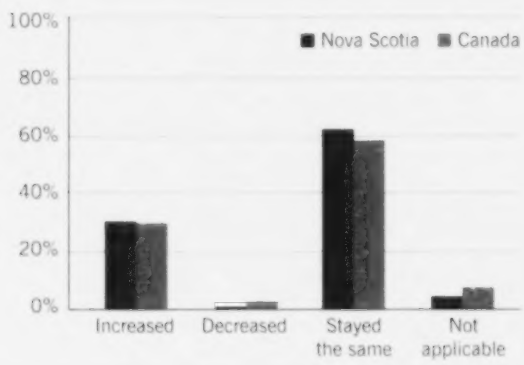
- Business can only take advantage of improvements if they know about them.
- Nova Scotia residents and interest groups have a right to know how regulation works in Nova Scotia and how it is improving so protection and competitiveness can both benefit.
- Government employees continue to improve their expertise and ability in regulation when they get to share ideas and learn from one another, as well as external experts.

## Looking forward

The past year has moved the Better Regulation Initiative forward and in new directions, going further than just the paperwork burden. Just take a look at the progress stories throughout this report for a sample of the accomplishments. The next year will see:

- further reductions in the paperwork burden on business;
- a focus on bringing wait times for licenses or permits within 10 business days;
- BizPaL rolled out to several municipalities in the province;
- more work on promoting compliance, rather than just enforcing it; and
- greater focus on the quality of regulation.

**How has the cost of compliance changed over the past three years?**




Source: StatsCan 2005 Survey of Regulatory Compliance Costs

In addition, the Nova Scotia government will continue to track progress toward the Better Regulation Initiative targets and keep an eye on other surveys and measurements that help us understand the issues and our impact on them.

*"Ultimately we need to ensure that doing business in this province doesn't just look or feel easier, it must actually be easier. Businesses need to experience this for themselves."* Bob Fowler, Deputy Minister responsible for the Better Regulation Initiative

## You can play a role

The Better Regulation Initiative has benefited from listening to many voices over the past two years, and it continues to depend on input to succeed. That's why:

- the steering committee meets at least three times a year with business organizations;
- departments host consultations to gather input on issues and solutions; and
- the provincial government works with the Council of Atlantic Premiers on improving regulation and participates in discussions with counterparts and business representatives like the one held on April 16, 2007, in Moncton.

There's a role for everyone to play as we move forward. If you're interested in regulation, whether a business person, community leader, Nova Scotia resident or member of an interest group, you can:

- learn more about regulation, its benefits, limitations and alternatives;
- provide input on issues being discussed and, what's more, offer your ideas for various solutions; and
- participate in consultations held by departments.

The BRI website www.gov.ns.ca/betterregulation, launched at the end of January 2007, provides current information on Better Regulation, as well as an ongoing feedback opportunity for anyone who wants to take advantage of it.

*"Nova Scotia's Better Regulation Initiative has all of the factors needed for success: measurement, public reporting and reduction targets. It's a model we're waving across the country."* Leanne Hachey, Vice-President, Atlantic, Canadian Federation of Independent Business

NOVA SCOTIA

www.gov.ns.ca/betterregulation